

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS ISTANBUL 001313

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EUR/SE, DS/DSS/OSAC, DS/IP/EUR

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ASEC](#) [KPAO](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: MEDIA GETS IT WRONG ON TWO TERROR STORIES

1. (U) On July 26, TGRT TV station, a part of the Ihlas Group of companies, aired a mistaken report on its daily news program that there had been a large explosion with many injured in Istanbul's Taksim Square. (Note: There was no such explosion. End note.) The report was supplemented by a TGRT reporter calling in "live" from the scene, who confirmed the bombing. Several other channels, including Haberturk and reportedly some international wires, picked up the story, as did police who rushed to the area to verify reports. Minutes after the story was broadcast, TGRT reported that the "explosion claims proved unfounded." Turkish national police detained two TGRT reporters who were released after giving statements.

2. (U) It is unclear if this incident was the result of a bad hoax for which there will be punishment, or if it simply resulted from the two reporters' incompetence. When the CG queried Istanbul's Police Chief about the TGRT story in a July 27 outcall, the Chief simply stated the TGRT report was a "false report" and did not elaborate on the case.

3. (U) TGRT and the Ihlas Group are owned by the Oren family. The group also owns Ihlas News Agency, one of Turkey's news agencies, with a wide network of reporters, that is often used as a source by other channels. They are generally considered to be professional and past has worked with them in the past.

4. (U) In an unrelated development, Vatan newspaper on July 29 reported that Istanbul's Deputy Police Chief Sammaz Demirtas said he expected an Al Qaeda attack in Istanbul by November 2005. When queried about the story, Demirtas told RSO his remarks had been taken out of context and that he had been misquoted. He claimed Vatan would be printing a retraction.

5. (U) Comment: The attacks in the U.K. and Egypt, on top of the recent bombs incidents in Cesme and Kusadasi, may have some Istanbul residents feeling nervous, with memories of the 2003 bombings not so distant. Some Turkish media outlets may be seeking to capitalize on that sense of unease by pursuing terror-related stories that sell, whether the story is there or not.

ARNETT